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AUTHOR O'Connor, Susan
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ABSTRACT

This report documents observations and findings from a site visit to Southern Hills Developmental Services (SHDS), an agency providing services to people with disabilities in the South Dakota community of Hot Springs. Half of the people using the services are American Indians. The report discusses the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and traditions of the Lakota Sioux Indian culture, the oppression faced by these Indians due to White domination, the Hot Springs community, and the challenges to SHDS in providing culturally sensitive services. Services provided by SHDS include a group home, community training services, and employment services. The problem with removing individuals from their reservation community to acquire other needed services is discussed. Language problems between staff and clients are noted, along with issues of privacy, cultural differences in dress, and development of assertiveness. Throughout the report, the need for community connections, at both an individual level and an agency level, is stressed. (JDD)

"I'M NOT INDIAN ANYMORE": THE CHALLENGE OF PROVIDING CULTURALLY SENSITIVE SERVICES TO AMERICAN INDIANS

Center on Human Policy

"I'M NOT INDIAN ANYMORE"
THE CHALLENGE OF PROVIDING CULTURALLY SENSITIVE SERVICES TO AMERICAN INDIANS

Susan O'Connor
Center on Human Policy
Syracuse University
200 Huntington Hall, 2nd Floor
Syracuse, NY 13244-2340

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PAUL'S DRUGSTORE

I met Anna, Della and Reena in September of 1989 during a 4 day site visit to Southern Hills Developmental Services (SHDS), an agency providing services to people with disabilities in the small South Dakota community of Hot Springs. After talking with each over the first few days of my visit, I was delighted to be asked to join them on a sunny fall Friday to have coffee at "the drugstore." We all piled into my rental car for the short journey that would have been a quick walk for the three women on any other day, but Della wanted first to show me where she lived and worked.

Being from a small community in the midwest and growing up in the late 50s and 60s, I was reminiscing that romanticized feeling of small town hospitality I sometimes believe I grew up with. The worries of the city were far away and a sense of familiarity was already with me after these few short days. I followed my new friends into territory that I found they had some command over.

As we entered Paul's drugstore, I was struck by the emptiness of the shelves. It was as though the drugstore was only a facade for the important part of the store, the soda fountain that lingered in the back. A woman appeared wearing bright pink lipstick which matched her polyester smock. Her beehive hairdo and pointed glasses completed a classic stereotypic image of small town America I had stored away. She followed us to the back. Della knew exactly where she was going and what she wanted. "Hi, Diane," she said with a wave but little eye contact. Both Reena and Anna repeated the greeting and were immediately responded to by name. Not to feel out of place I did the same as we all snickered. We passed a half full rack of greeting cards and made our way to the soda fountain, where the women had things to discuss and coffee to order. We walked up to the counter to order, each sitting at a stool. From a

corner just a few feet away came a yell of "Hi, Della." All three women turned to respond with a greeting and a wave. A woman stood behind the J.C. Penney ordering counter with catalogues strewn about. She quickly walked over to Della, whispered something to her, and they giggled as she returned to her spot.

Diane seemed to know what each of the women wanted before they ordered. Today they added a donut as I had offered to pay. Della got up and moved to one of the three kitchen-like tables used by patrons. The conversation, in which Diane was an active participant, revolved around how much weight the women had lost. Anna reminded them that she had won the trophy several weeks in a row for losing the most weight. All were impressed. The familiar word TOPS, one of the first major weight loss programs, came up over and over. They talked about weighing in and as the conversation continued and the coffee cups emptied several other women passed through either stopping to order coffee or just passing by with a card or an item to buy. It was as though they needed to see who was there and offer a quick hi.

We finished and the three women seemed in a hurry to get on with their respective evening activities. They all exchanged goodbyes with Della waving, "I'll see you tomorrow."

This was a very ordinary Friday afternoon activity for women living in a small town. The difference here was that Della, Anna and Reena are Indian women, and the other women are not. Anna and Reena lived most of their lives on the Pine Ridge Indian reservation located about 50 miles from Hot Springs. Della and her sister, who was described by agency workers as severely disabled, had been taken off the reservation when they were very small and placed in one of South Dakota's state

institutions. Della went mainly "to keep her sister company." All three of these women are labelled by the social service system as having a disability and are living in Hot Springs receiving services from SHDS. Here at Paul's none of this seemed to matter. All appeared comfortable in this situation. Yet behind this warmth and inclusiveness lies a deep history not always filled with such acceptance for the individuals and the agency that encourages these women to be part of this community. This is a story about such an agency and the people it serves.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter shows how one small agency strives to meet the needs of all of the people they serve, especially the Indians[1] who make up half of the people using their services. It also touches on the lives and services to people in a rural community from a small agency trying to maintain its autonomy at a time where bigger is presumed to be better.

In order to better understand the meaning of services to Indians, it is important to look not only at programs, but also at the cultural background people bring with them to this agency. In doing so, I will first discuss the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and the Lakota culture including some of their traditions. This will be followed by a description of the Hot Springs community and Southern Hills Developmental Services and the challenges they face in providing culturally-sensitive services.

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[1]The word Indian is used throughout this chapter because it is what the people I talked with choose to be called.

During my visit, I interviewed and spent time with the agency director and staff as well as people receiving services. I attended an evening in-service and visited the vocational and residential services. I also accompanied them on several of the social activities within the community that are part of their daily lives. One day was spent with Janet[2], an Indian staff person at SHDS, and Anna and Reena on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Because this chapter focuses on an agency run mainly by non-Indians, many of the perceptions of the Indian culture are described through their understandings of that culture. These understandings came from talking to Indians on the reservation and those that work at SHDS as well as living in a community where both Indian and non-Indians live. Also unique to this agency is the fact that it's director, Lilah Pengra, holds a Ph.D. in anthropology. All of this then guides the way agency staff struggle to provide culturally-sensitive services.

THE LAKOTA OF PINE RIDGE

> They made us many promises, more than I can remember, but they never kept but one; they promised to take our land and they took it. (Red Cloud, Chief of the Oglala Sioux speaking in 1870)

Driving through the Black Hills in South Dakota, heading south toward the community of Hot Springs, there is little that reminds one of Chief Red Cloud's words. The countryside is extraordinary in its richness and beauty, but one must imagine the early west and what happened to Chief Red Cloud and his people. Today much of what remains for the Sioux is in the form of reservations. For the tourist, souvenirs

[2]With the exception of Janet Moran and Lilah Pengra, all other names are pseudonyms.

suggest memories of cowboys and Indians, and the great Mt. Rushmore, with the heads of presidents, offers the visitor the illusion that the history of the west began when the great white men were carved into the mountainside some fifty years ago.

The promises that were broken when the land was taken from the Sioux, as they were from many Indian tribes across this country, run much deeper and have had a longer overriding effect on their lives today. Though this chapter is not written directly about the loss of that land, the story of Indians being supported at SHDS cannot be understood without knowing the context of their culture and the oppression they have faced.

Pine Ridge

The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, located in the rolling hills and prairie land in the southwestern corner of South Dakota is home to approximately 22,000 Lakota Sioux Indians. In this state of 700,000 people, Indians comprise 75,000 of that number. The per capita income on the reservation is $4,600, only one third of South Dakota's average and the lowest in the country. Unemployment on the reservation tops 80% where, out of an 11,000 person work force, only 2,000 people are employed mainly in government or tribal jobs.

In the past, the reservation had several places of employment such as a prison farm where people could buy groceries, especially produce. It also had a cannery and a moccasin factory which has now moved to Rapid City. There are several grocery stores on the reservation, but many people drive to communities just off the reservation which are called border communities, to buy their items at more

reasonable prices. Most jobs now require people to leave the reservation and this presents the problem of transportation. There are many small towns on the reservation and a lot of miles in between. Often even for doctors' appointments people must hire someone to transport them which could cost as much as $20.00 roundtrip.

Most people here live in small government built homes in scattered housing projects. In many cases, a large number of family and extended family members live in each household. Housing availability is an issue especially in the more rural areas outside the towns that dot the area around the reservation.

Many of the residents of the reservation fall in a world between European American and Lakota traditions as they have interacted with communities outside the reservation in order to survive monetarily. Yet this land remains the spiritual center for many of the Lakota people and is said to be the place where the soul of the nation endures.

Lakota Culture

The term Lakota refers to the tribal name as well as the language spoken by the Lakota Sioux. Historically, the Sioux moved from North Carolina to Minnesota and then to the plains. By the late 1860s, through a treaty with the U.S. government, they had already been confined to territory in South Dakota which at that time covered nearly half of the present day state. That amount of land decreased to the size of today's reservations as a result of "agreements" in 1876 and 1889 with the U.S. government as well as the discovery of gold in the Black Hills, making the land more

valuable to the government and non-Indian people. There are two reservations where Lakota Sioux live today, one called Pine Ridge where most of the Indians in this chapter were from and the other called Rosebud.

During the early attempts toward assimilating Indians into mainstream culture both the federal government and the church constructed schools and worked to instill western values within the Indian culture. According to Grobsmith (1981), many children were taken from their homes and placed in boarding schools where they were forced to learn English and to give up many traditional ways and practices. They were whipped if they spoke Lakota to each other and were often sent to work as domestics in non-Indian households during the summer. In spite of such attempts, the language and the culture of the Lakota survived but not without some acculturation of values and beliefs from non-Indian culture.

Lakota Traditions, Values and Beliefs

The spirituality of the Lakota people is something very sacred to them, and has an impact on many areas of their lives including, social interaction, feelings of identity and disability. Though all Lakota people do not practice any or all of these ceremonial traditions they remain an important part of the culture. There were many ceremonial traditions that were highly discouraged and were illegal up until the 1950s. Sun dance, for example, a ceremonial ritual, was illegal from 1880s to 1950s, yet it remained alive and began to thrive again in the 50s.

Sun Dance. The sun dance, is the most sacred of Lakota rituals. It is used today to unite the Lakota people in ritual of self-awareness, political consciousness and common identity (Grobsmith, p. 69).

Yuwipi. Another ceremony that was illegal for 40 years but survived because it went underground was the yuwipi ceremony. This ceremony focuses on curing and healing and is also important for resolving personality conflicts around a person's identity; for example, someone who lost something or as a means of helping someone considered to have a problem with drinking. Yuwipi is seen as a healing of the community as well as the individual, so there is strong community support yet the focus remains on one person.

The Sweat Lodge. This is considered one of the oldest rituals in Lakota culture. It is a ceremony or purification rite and is preformed regularly. It is sometimes a preparatory cleansing for another ritual such as sun dance, or sometimes is a rite unto itself. The purpose of the sweats is not just a physical cleansing but a spiritual purification for men and women.

Today, many of the ceremonies remain and thrive; this includes both religious and cultural ceremonial functions such as the pow-wows. These are practiced along with Christianity which was absorbed and practiced by the Lakota. Some practice all, so they might belong to the Catholic and Episcopalian churches and still take part in the sweat lodge and sun dance.

Equally as important as traditions are the strong values of the Lakota culture. They are often described as sharing, family, respect and individuality. With sharing, the expectation is that when you need something you can ask for it or when you have

something others can ask for part of it. Family is also of high value in the culture. This includes being part of a family as well as honoring its' members which can mean sticking together in the face of outsiders. Respect is also an important value. For example, using limited direct eye contact and simply respecting the presence of others without needing to engage in extensive verbal exchange are behaviors common to Indian people and are misunderstood by many non-Indians. Finally, individuality is one way that people express their distinct characters. Understanding these values is important in trying to understand the culture of the Lakota people.

On the reservation, there remain political separations that affect how the Indians interact with each other as well as their how they interface with people outside of the reservation. Some of the separations are related to the beliefs about differences between Indians who are considered to be full bloods and those who are mixed bloods.[3] The belief is that the higher percentage of Indian blood you have, the more Indian you are. When asked what it means to be Indian one staff person replied "well, it's blood!"

This separation of blood lines was exacerbated by a treaty with the U.S. government written in 1868 in relation to what services would be provided to the Sioux. This treaty, which was ultimately broken and re-written, provided for health services, food and rations, in proportion of the blood quantum of the individual.

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[3]Though inference that a person's race depends on blood can be viewed as racist (Pathfinder Directory, by Amylee, Native American Indian Resource Center), the words full blood, half blood, full breed, and half breed are used here because it was the language used by both Indian and non-Indians that I talked with.

THE BORDER COMMUNITY OF HOT SPRINGS

Following a windy road south through the Black Hills leads to the small community of Hot Springs located about 60 miles south of Rapid City. Hot Springs, a town of approximately 5,000 people, is a border community to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Many of the community people are in some way, usually through employment, connected to either the state Veterans Home or the federal Veterans Administration Medical Center. There are two Housing and Urban Development (HUD) high rises serving the community whose population is at least 50% people who are older. Because of this large percentage, they are not viewed as a devalued group by community standards.

A border community brings with it many negative connotations as well as stereotypical attitudes because of the increased opportunities for the Indian and non-Indian culture to meet. As exemplified in the story that opened this report, there are many relationships that have developed by people getting to know each other as well as with activities such as combining the pow-wow and the rodeos. Often those Indians and non-Indians traveling each circuit have shared interests.

There are also a number of prejudices that have developed over the years, one of which concerns the consumption of alcohol. Alcohol is sold in the border communities and not on the reservation. People who want to buy or consume alcohol must drive to border communities; therefore, alcohol-related violations and accidents

on the highway between Pine Ridge and Hot Springs increase, as they would on any group in a similar situation. This brings a tendency for negative stereotypes according to Lilah Pengra, the director of SHDS and a member of the community:

> Often a prejudice in the community confuses poverty and the things associated with poverty such as alcoholism...with being Indian...people don't understand that being drunk is not part of the Indian culture...it becomes magnified when it's Indian.

Another area that lends itself to negative stereotyping within the community is the eligibility of Indians for surplus commodities. Sometimes commodities are sold for cash by the Indians to people in town or ranchers in the area who are enthusiastic buyers. These interactions can be viewed two ways. One is that the Indians are taking advantage of the system; the other, which takes into consideration the lack of jobs and the history of poverty that exists on the reservation, is that they are taking a bad situation and making it an opportunity. Two of the major commodities given to the Indian people are powdered milk and cheese. Many of the Lakota people have a lactose deficiency which means they can't use these commodities so in essence, they are being resourceful and making the most of a bad situation.

SOUTHERN HILLS DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

Southern Hills Developmental Services is one of 17 Adjustment Training Centers (ATCs) in South Dakota providing community services for adults with disabilities. Each ATC is a private, non-profit organization offering both residential and day services. ATCs are governed by regulations from the Department of Human Services and are

highly reliant on funding from the Division of Developmental Disabilities (Racino, O'Connor, Shoultz, Taylor & Walker, 1989). Each of the ATCs vary in size from those serving as many as 200 people to others such as Southern Hills serving 22 people in 14 funding slots. SHDS has a total of 17 staff, 6 Indian and 11 non Indian staff. There is also a board of director's member who is an Indian. Staff turnover is an issue at the agency as they must compete with the two Veterans' facilities whose wages can start as high as $7.20 an hour.

Looking beyond the traditional ways of providing services is what makes SHDS different. The vision that the agency has created over the past year is one where all of the people served can live in places of their own or with someone and be working in the community. There is also a vision of inclusion and a push to look at the individual and their specific needs. Much of this vision was created and is driven by the director, Lilah Pengra, who has contributed a sensitivity and awareness of the issues concerning the Indian population. Although she believes that there should be an array of services on the reservation, she also feels an obligation to deal with the situation that presently exists. She explains:

> What I'm trying to do is to get staff to understand you can teach someone to cope with this environment, to live successfully in Hot Springs, but you don't have to teach them not to be Indian to do that.

Lilah is very adamant about making the distinction that culture is not exclusive to Indians, that we all have cultures that impact on our lives, but she says: "It is just most striking here; we're dealing with a group who have been blatantly stripped of power for many years."

The importance of cultural backgrounds is an awareness that is part of the agency's philosophy now for all people that they serve. Lilah clarifies:

> It's a very individual thing. You can't just say this client is Indian; therefore, we are going to put him on a savings program and this person is not so we're going to put him on this program. Of course not, there is individuality there...if you teach everyone exactly alike you think you're not discriminating, but yes you are because everyone has different needs and different values.

A major focus over the past year has been on Indians being served by the agency and how their needs were or were not being addressed.

The Services Provided by the Agency

SHDS supports people in a number of ways. The agency has one traditional group home with a fifty year mortgage through Farmers Home Administration (FmHA). Lilah, however, feels that having this mortgage will not hinder them in moving people out into places of their own. This offers beds to 14 people who eat together in a dining room crowded with tables. Staff in the group home also provide support and try to facilitate connections with people in the community. For the most part people are free to come and go within the community.

There are also eight people on what is called community training services, where they are given a certain number of hours per week of support on such things as shopping, cooking, money management, or whatever they need to support them in their living situations. Funding comes through the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waiver through which the agency receives $38.00 a day per person.

As mentioned before, because of the need the agency actually received $28.00 a day for its additional five slots though in actuality it supported 13 people on the money that money.

Six of these individuals live in subsidized senior citizen high rises at two locations in the town. In these high rises, they are not allowed to have roommates because of rules by the Hot Springs housing authority. Here they pay $95-$112 per month in comparison to general housing stock which would run $185 in Hot Springs. The biggest problem in helping people move into the community is the difference in the amount of money they must pay for rent if subsidized housing is not available.

The agency has tried to create flexibility in the provision of services. Lilah explained and several staff members reiterated, "We're trying to develop alternatives with the system we have, you know "A" versus "B" and nothing in between."

SHDS provides a variety of work situations as well. Although many of the people who live in the house attend the ATCs day program (what many would call a sheltered workshop), there have been community alternatives developed over the past year by Pat, the vocational coordinator, and two full-time people, both being Indian. Over the past year, people have started working in a factory in town and a work crew at Archies, a local restaurant and bar which had recently closed because of a fire. The contact was made because someone who used to work at the bar began to work for SHDS. The importance of connections and people who know people in the community plays a large part in job acquisition. One man was hired because he knew

a lot of people within Hot Springs. Pat is trying to work with local places such as Pizza Hut to develop jobs. One problem mentioned in acquiring jobs at local businesses is that small family owned places tend to hire family members first.

ISSUES OF CULTURE AND SERVICES

Services on the Reservation

In order to understand how staff at SHDS think about providing services to Indians, it is again important to provide a context related to services on the reservation and the culture as SHDS staff understand it. This has a great deal of impact on how they approach provision of services.

Indians have typically received services through the Indian Health Services, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the state social service system in South Dakota. The point of entry usually comes through the Indian Health Service[4] which is a branch of the public health service and provides health and medical services on the reservation. They deal with every kind of disability, yet people with developmental disabilities are a low priority because other issues such as mental health and alcoholism take priority at least in terms of dollars spent. Bonnie, the case manager at SHDS, said: "When people are referred to services off of the reservation it is often because families feel they have tried everything and now must try the white way." There are also public health nurses who do home visits to families on the reservation. Janet talked about her mother's experience as a visiting nurse on the reservation:

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[4]Indian Health Services--a branch of the public health service provides health services, including well-baby clinic, emergency and surgery services, maternity care and all hospitalization needs. It also works on health environmental health care issues in public places such as schools.

> She used to go in and they would check babies feet and hands for signs of fetal alcoholism. There was one mother who knew something was wrong with the baby, so whenever my mother would come, she would hide the baby and say it wasn't there or that her grandmother had it. Mom could usually hear the baby cry. They hide them because they are afraid you're going to take them away.

The lack of trust in services make many people leery of seeking them out. As Janet said: "The culture would tend to take care so people would tend not to enter the system."

"Maybe Parents Would Keep Them Home if They Had Some Help"

SHDS is invested in trying to provide culturally sensitive services to Indians who are forced to move away from their communities because the services they need are only available off the reservation. Often such services are not sensitive to their cultural needs. Indians may have, according to Lilah, "difficulties when they move to cities because of cultural conflicts. This often leads them back to the reservation where, in many cases, they are absorbed back into their families and are often written off to the system." Janet reiterates, "For a lot of Indians, those who are mentally retarded maybe parents would keep them at home...if they had some help."

Providing services, then, off the reservation has become a major challenge to SHDS. Lilah speaks to the issue, emphasizing over and over that their major commitment would be to serve the Indians on the reservation. She explains:

> I think for many individuals it would be better to stay in their own community with their family...We really should have an agency on the "res"; there used to be but it closed because of health standards...There were...different values on

how things should be done. If the standards are culturally biased and are applied then you close the place instead of finding other ways to do it.

One example related to the lack of services on the "res" an Indian man living on the reservation who was on the waiting list of SHDS. Presently, his main "work" on the reservation was his daily visit to the post office where he greeted everyone who came in to do business. He was described as "having nothing to do" in the referral, but, Lilah said:

> He could be trained to be a mail man. He knows everybody and they all know him and like him and talk with him...why should we take him out of that? He lives with his sister. The main problem is the inconsistency in taking his medications. He is the kind of person where if we had an outreach on Pine Ridge it would be perfect. Don't take him out of his community just so he gets his meds everyday.

If a child is taken off the reservation it is usually because all other possibilities have been exhausted and the family can no longer provide the necessary support. Sometimes it is because of a death of a significant caretaker. The actual separation from the reservation means more than just physical removal from the land especially for those families who are full bloods. This distinction of blood, described earlier, has an impact on how staff at SHDS understand the needs of people being referred to the agency. The family name alone can tell them about the family and aid in their understanding of the person's background. Lilah explains:

> Indians could identify which communities were mixed and which are more traditional. If the person is from one community I only have to see a name and know it's a more traditional family or from another community I'll know they are much more white oriented and have a lot more experience with white teachers and ministers. They speak English. They understand the rules of both.

This, then, helps her and the staff identify what it will mean for the person and family in adjusting to this new environment.

For example, when I asked if people being served from the "res" who were now earning money were more valued because of these earnings, one Indian staff member responded: "It could be looked at positively by half breeds but not by full bloods. To them they have lost a family member to white society. It is a failure." Looking at each individual then becomes a priority in service provision.

What was important for John, a young Indian man in his 20s who had been referred to SHDS, exemplifies their commitment to flexibility and the individual needs people have.

"We Had to Build Trust": John's Story

John is a 24-year-old man caught very much between two worlds. His label of "dually diagnosed" seems in some strange way to describe the two worlds he has had to straddle by being part of the human service system and moving off the reservation. John has little connection with his father and for a number of years lived with his foster mother on the reservation until she felt she could no longer support him. His natural mother died at his birth.

Before coming to SHDS, John had lived in six agencies, including psychiatric institutions throughout the state, all of whom said that he had such severe behavioral problems that nobody would keep him. He was known to "walk into a place and disrupt everything." At the time he was referred to SHDS a long list of "behaviors" and problems came with him.

When John first came to SHDS he wouldn't do anything. Pat explains:

He felt restricted, he had to take on white man's community but we didn't want him to feel he had to become a white man. We wanted to let him know that he could go back to Pine Ridge, that we weren't going to keep him from his friends. He wouldn't even talk; he needed to adjust to us. He got here rebelled and didn't want to do anything. We gave him a lot of leeway, time and space. Basically we just gave him support and that worked. We also had to build trust.

On several occasions John went back to the reservation returning when his mother said she couldn't keep him. John had a strong desire for physical labor and to work outdoors; he rejected many of the indoor jobs they found for him. Finally he got a job breaking up old concrete for a cement crew and has now expressed an interest in working on a ranch, a prevalent job in the area. As Pat said, "It would be a great job for him because he likes outdoors."

The agency has also tried to do to support John related to listening to his needs and respecting his culture. John feels that he possesses spirits and is often pursuing ways to rid himself of them. One of the things that he expressed a desire to do was to go to a medicine man. Pat explains: "We found a medicine man that he can go to

cause that's what he wants." They have found a medicine man in the area and support John in going when and if he so chooses. Pat says: "Now it will be up to him if he wants it or not."

Moving to Hot Springs versus some of the other places he has been in the state has also been good in terms of connecting with family. Often there is little consideration given in referrals to where family members live or what the job market is in a particular area that might meet a person's needs. This community has been good for John not only for proximity to the reservation, but John also has an uncle living in one of the Vets homes who he can go and visit when he chooses. Staff at SHDS are very open to arranging visits back to the reservation upon John's request. Though all of the things John struggles with are not solely related to cultural differences, he is now listened to and respected rather than being written off only as a behavioral problem.

CHALLENGES OF PROVIDING CULTURALLY SENSITIVE SERVICES

Support at SHDS is viewed in many ways and occurs on many levels. Being aware of the support needs of people from other cultures is something that has been challenging to this agency, but it has also helped them to grow.

One challenge is their desire to hire bi-lingual staff. At the time of my visit, there were three bi-lingual staff and three who were Indian and spoke only English. Lilah also discussed some of the concerns of her non-Indian staff regarding people speaking Lakota within the agency. One of the things the non-Indian staff have said is that they think they are being talked about. She explains:

> I told them, "Yeah, but maybe our clients think that when you're speaking English." I use every opportunity...to bring cultural awareness without beating them over the head and saying this is cultural awareness.

There have been a number of opportunities created within the agency to at least begin to respond to the language needs of the Indians they serve. The agency now pays for a teacher of the Lakota language, and staff can attend if they choose on their own time. Six staff chose to be involved as compared to one 6 months earlier. Though the staff will not become bi-lingual, there is the feeling that they will at least understand some of the people who speak only a few words of Lakota. This effort also demonstrates a receptiveness to their language and gives another way to communicate.

Another area of controversy is in relation to assessment. There are people served who may only have one word sentences in English but may have four word sentences in Lakota. Bonnie tells how the degree of oral language used by non-Indians is greater than that used by Indians so that assessments "do little to measure abilities." The agency is looking at more non-traditional ways than assessments to learn about the people they serve as well as trying to view the person's actions as indicators of their abilities. Bonnie explained:

> We have to take into account the person. One individual had a propensity for... taking candy in the house. That would be looked at as being very negative but this person took the time and effort to (A) figure out where the candy box was and (B) determine when staff was or was not located near the kitchen, find the

key, use it and relock the box and return the key to its place. Verbally that wouldn't score high but it took a lot of thought to do so.

The issues of privacy and comfort with silence are also important. Where dominant culture (typically defined by European American, middle-class norms and values) in this country has a tendency to want to fill silence, this is not required by most Indians. There is a need for company, just someone to be there but not necessarily speaking. Silence was also brought up in relation to understanding differences and families when they come with their children. Bonnie explains:

> With a Native American family I introduce myself then I make a generic remark...Then I will remain silent and wait for their response. If I get overly assertive I usually don't elicit any responses and it becomes a negative situation. We don't do a lot of social history taking. Usually this is a grief process because they are losing a family member so I don't want to ask too many questions.

That awareness and sensitivity to families is important to Indian families as it should be to all families especially during this time of letting go of the child. It is equally as important for contacts with the agency and the child in the future. Though this may never be a place where a family feels totally comfortable, there is an attempt to make the family feel they can trust and are welcome at any time versus feeling that now their child is totally out of their world and culture. Many of these lessons can be applied to all families.

"I'm Not Indian Anymore": The Story of Anna Brave Heart

The changes that occur individually for Indians coming off the reservation to receive services and the respect the agency tries to show for each person is exemplified well in Anna's move to Hot Springs.

Anna is a very warm and friendly 26-year-old woman who at the time of my visit had lived in SHDS's group home for nearly a year. Her smiling round face seems to offer a sense of "let's talk" to nearly everyone she meets. Her blue polyester pants and colorful flowered shirt typified a stereotypic image of the dress of a small town older woman in the midwest. Anna is well known throughout Hot Springs as few can avoid her engaging hi's whether it be a wave as they drive down the street or a chat as they sip on their coffee in one of the local cafes. Anna speaks both Lakota and English. Since moving to Hot Springs and into the group home at SHDS, Anna has become very active in the community. She has joined an aerobics class and goes to TOPS exercise group two times a week where she won trophies for her weight loss on several occasions. She is involved in the Lakota chapel, the catholic church, and a Bible class made up of Indians and non-Indians. Anna also works on a job crew at the workshop and often, on week-ends, goes to visit her boyfriend who lives in a near-by highrise. All in all, her life is very active. As Janet said: "She doesn't like being alone. She likes people."

Before moving to Hot Springs, Anna lived on the reservation with her family in one large room; she worked closely with her grandmother to take care of the other members in the household though they struggled financially. After her grandmother's

death, which is still difficult for Anna, she was moved into the nursing home on the reservation by the Department of Social Services. Anna lived there for a short time but was moved because state law had an age requirement and Anna was too young to continue living there. The only alternative was to move off the reservation, so she was moved to Hot Springs and into the group home. Since moving, Anna has had almost no involvement with her family even though the agency has tried to keep such connections as open as possible. She has returned to the "res" several times for visits.

After moving to Hot Springs, Anna struggled with the changes that she now encountered living outside the reservation. One of her first requests was to tell the staff she didn't want to babysit: "I had enough of taking care of kids." Yet there were many other things that would unfold as time went on, things that were now different as she and the staff discovered what it meant to Anna to be Indian.

Anna would return to the reservation and people would tell her that she was different. Lilah pursued what being different now meant to her and she responded: "EEE (yes in Lakota), I don't know, I don't know, well, I'm not Indian anymore." When asked what makes her Indian, she replied, "wearing dresses." It is common in the dominant culture for women to wear pants instead of dresses. Anna now began to take part in exercise programs such as TOPS and aerobics where she wore sweatpants. She worked cleaning and as she saw others wearing pants she would alternate them with dresses. Yet to her, this represented not being Indian as she had worn dresses all her life. Some days, according to staff, Anna puts her "other clothes"

on; dealing with that transition is important to her. Another small but important thing to Anna was getting her haircut. "We didn't even think of it" said one staff person. "She identifies that with being different than home."

Something very important to Anna, which was now very different, was her opportunity to speak Lakota. Though she speaks English very well, keeping and using her native language was important. Staff found a person, a friend in the community, who also speaks Lakota, with whom Anna could spend time. Their relationship has blossomed and the two really like each other. They meet weekly going out for coffee, a piece of pie, or simply to church together.

One conflict that arose for the staff regarding some of Anna's habits was what was initially called "theft" by some staff. In trying to understand why Anna took things at times Lilah explained it in the context of the poverty that Anna's family lived in and describes:

> Having adapted to living on the streets for a long time she likes to accumulate things. She must feel secure enough, and when she's ready to let go, she will and if it takes 20 years that's fine. You can't expect her overnight, to change, for all she knows the next meal may not appear. Why should she believe we are telling her the truth. She's making plans for when it's going to be like it was.

Anna seems happy now with her new environment. She has chosen, for the time being, to stay in the group home and said she didn't want to live alone.

Though Anna chose to stay living with a group of people, the same was not true, nor did staff assume that it would be true of another Indian woman, Reena. Her living choices since leaving the reservation were quite different.

"I Get a Little Lonely Sometimes": Reena's Story

Reena, like Anna, had lived with her family on the Pine Ridge reservation for most of her life. She is a small woman about 4'9" with a square build. Her rolled up at the cuff blue jeans made her look as though she fit into the community. Her straight brown hair hangs to her shoulders. In a soft spoken manner and a giggle in her voice she actively engages people. Reena's slow moving pace and good natured smile make people like her immediately.

Reena was referred to SHDS by the Indian Health Service after her mother died and there was some speculation of abuse. As she talks about growing up she conveys a strong sense that she was a major contributor to the work that went on at home. Upon moving to Hot Springs, Reena lived in the group home for about 6 months. She quickly insisted she move out on her own. Now she lives in one of the two subsidized highrises about two blocks from the group home where she remains a frequent visitor. If she has a problem, she knows people there will help her out. Though she has expressed feeling lonely at times, she still desires to live alone: "I get a little lonely sometimes. I don't want a roommate though, I want to live by myself. I like that, I really do. I got my refrigerator and my radio and my TV." She also proudly shows visitors her sequin work and the shawl she uses for pow-wow dances. Reena receives community living training which means that a staff person spends 20 hours a week to support her with shopping or other needs she may have.

One of the issues that the staff had to work out with Reena was in encouraging her to make her own choices while at the same time trying to offer her some skills so that she wouldn't be taken advantage of in this community. Both culturally and personally, Reena is someone who will often give people things; sharing is part of her nature. Since moving on her own she has had frequent visits by one of the men who works at the Vets home up the hill from her. On a number of occasions he has asked Reena for money and/or food which she has often given him. Feeling she was being taken advantage of, staff began advising Reena on how to become more assertive, a valued skill in mainstream culture. They tried to teach Reena that she could say no to him if she wanted. Reena describes using this new skill: "I say go to work and make your own money!" Yet, learning to be "assertive" has presented Reena with conflicts and was hard for her. Though she did practice this new found skill it also alienated her from her own culture on a visit home.

On one visit, a male cousin who was underage asked that she buy alcohol for him and she refused. For this refusal Reena felt somewhat ostracized. She was ignored and not spoken to for several days. Consequently, she doesn't want to go and stay very long with her family, yet the agency has worked to help Reena contribute with food and gifts for the children when she does return home so that there is a sharing. However if not viewed within the larger cultural context, what is empowering in one situation, and maybe necessary, is the same skill that in another environment is alienating.

Another issue that often comes up in service system living is that of diet. In a check-up Reena was found to have high cholesterol and was then to be placed on a low cholesterol diet. Part of her daily diet was traditional Indian frybread which she made everyday from scratch. Being high in cholesterol, as it is made with lard, it was recommended that she not eat it. Instead the staff helped her with choosing other types of oils to fry it in. This seems like a small thing but unless people are aware of the differences and the importance of clothing and food culturally, this bit of who Reena is could have easily been erased and replaced with any generic bread.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Within a small community, especially, there is a strong need for personal connections, that sense of knowing your neighbors and them knowing you. The agency sees community integration as being more than a presence and uses every opportunity and every connection as a possible way to introduce the community to the people in the agency as well as the agency to the community. Bonnie summed up her feelings about SHDS and what they were learning. "One of the things I appreciate from a small agency is that we all make mistakes and we share that with the clients that we are all learning and growing. This is a neat agency for that."

Their relationship with the Indian community is also very important. Lilah talks about how she has been told on several occasions to go to Indian Health Service to get financial help. She comments, "I intend to." This along with the tribal council[5] are

[5]Tribal council--this is the main governing body of the tribe consisting of a president, vice-president and representatives from all of the communities on the reservation. The function of the council is to administer programs and services to members of the tribe and develop and conserve tribal property and resources.

potential resources but it is important first that they see that what SHDS is doing is benefiting their people.

CONCLUSION

It was difficult to focus on this agency in any one way. The agency's awareness of cultural differences has created a great deal of sensitivity toward all the people they serve. This chapter could also have been a story of community integration in small town America, as the strengths of SHDS also lie within this realm. The stories here present a variety of ways in which an agency serving Indian people has attempted to be sensitive and respectful to who people are and the ways in which the people they serve have lived. These insights, sensitivities, and ways of treating people helped me to know that many of the people involved in this agency had come from another culture and challenged those around them to pause and think before forcing the same kind of service on everyone. There is a sense of mutuality that exists making it clear that the staff are not the only teachers. The staff are continually presented with lessons that people outside of their own world present; a different language, different customs and traditions and an insight into the history of oppression make up the lives of the people they serve. If services must take place off the reservation, the Indians who are served must be listened to, respected, and be part of creating what those services are. They must not have to totally give up pride in their heritage and their histories to receive support.

Knowing people for who they are and really listening to them is something that is very difficult for us all and especially for agencies who must follow guidelines and regulations that depersonalize and categorize culture, class, gender or disability. This agency has tried to support Indians living within the Hot Springs community, yet it is certainly not the answer to a happy life. These people have been placed outside of their homes and their culture into communities that have many stereotypes about their disability and their very heritage. The larger more looming issues of powerlessness, poverty and oppression that Indians face in this country must continue to be brought to the surface for real change to occur. In the meantime, there are pockets of people and agencies who are challenging themselves, their beliefs and values. These are places often tucked away and the scope of their work may appear limited but they are places where changes occur daily between people. Places where relationships, respect and listening are priorities.

Everyone has a history, whether it is a history from living as an Indian, an African American, a European American or any of the other numerous ethnic groups that inhabit this country. Whether it has been to live at home with a family or in an institution, we must begin to recognize and strive, as the people of SHDS are doing, to challenge our assumptions, our prejudices and ourselves, to work with people rather than against them. We must begin to acknowledge and learn from the rich histories and the oppression that has made up so many of our lives.

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